

A large, thick, pink brushstroke graphic that forms a loose, circular shape, framing the main title text.

# A High Performance Organization...

## WHAT IS IT?

Enjoy going to work!

By Marco Schreurs  
& Alex Meingast

Copyright

ISBN: 978-90-822059-3-0

NUR: 801

Keywords: high performance organization, HPO, achieve more

External design: [www.sitestorm.nl](http://www.sitestorm.nl)

Content design: [www.sitestorm.nl](http://www.sitestorm.nl)

Printed: 1<sup>st</sup> edition, May 2015

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# HPO? Will this cost me extra time?

If you have received this booklet it is because the organization for which you work has probably decided that things can be done even more effectively. This in turn will provide you with many opportunities for improvement. Now you could be thinking: yet another project? Is this something else to do? I am already completely overloaded.

Whatever your thoughts are, this booklet has been written with you in mind. Any organization that wants to improve needs every single one of its employees to make a difference and improve through a combined effort, regardless of the department they work in. The HPO Center is helping organizations across the world to achieve this. Your organization may use the term HPO or it is possibly called something else. It is important for you to know that there are 35 aspects in which you and your organization can improve. These will be covered in this booklet.

Take your time to read through it all. Decide what you already do well and where you may be able to do even better. Discuss things with your colleagues. Tell your manager which points you think deserve attention.

You can allocate a score to every one of the 35 aspects covered in this booklet and then rank them from most to less significant. Then work on the aspects that deserve your attention. Reflect on this once every six months and determine if things really have improved. Compare your scores with your team and also discuss what you can work on together.

If you manage to improve any of the less ideal aspects yourself, you are making a difference. If you know what HPO is all about and you try to do your daily work based on HPO principles, other people will increasingly regard you as their role model. Your behavior will inspire them to do the same.

Reading through this booklet you will soon realize that improving is not necessarily more time consuming, but that it is just about doing your work differently. You will notice that your work becomes more enjoyable because everything you do together fits and works better.

The authors, Alex Meingast and Marco Schreurs, have faced a challenging task. They have combined over a decade of professional research, considerable knowledge and experience in this handy booklet that is easy to read and understand. With this booklet they make an important contribution to providing the expertise of the HPO Center. I am proud of this; well done!

I hope that you can use this booklet to improve your understanding of HPO and that you will use the questions in order to develop and improve yourself as well as your team. You might even read something that you can start doing differently straight away. That would really be in line with "HPO"!



*Esther Mollema, Founder, HPO Center and Direction Europe*

# A 'High Performance Organization', what is it? Yet another project? No its not.

A High Performance Organization or HPO, is really just an inspiring, motivating and challenging organization to its employees and customers.

What is noteworthy is that it is not always about large organizations. What it is all about is that you and your colleagues all do the "right things" together. This allows you to create a successful team or department and these are the foundations for a High Performance Organization (HPO)!

Scientific research and practical experience of hundreds of organizations around the world can help you with what you can do to become an HPO. This knowledge is, as the African proverb goes: 'water for life'. And this 'water' is the 35 characteristics described as part of the five 'HPO Factors':

- Management Quality
- Openness & Action Orientation
- Long-Term Orientation
- Continuous Improvement & Renewal
- Employee Quality

The related 35 characteristics involved are all outlined in this booklet. For many of these characteristics, you will read "Leadership of our organization ....". Note that does not mean that these characteristics are not important for everyone in the organization! Everyone is a leader in his/her function; not just at work but also at home, in health clubs, or anywhere. We challenge you to make a start on building your own successful team, department, and organization.

In other words, we want you to work for an inspiring and successful organization; but it is up to you to make it happen!

Alex Meingast & Marco Schreurs  
HPO Center  
[www.hpocenter.com](http://www.hpocenter.com)



*"Grass does not grow by pulling on it but by watering its roots."*

*African proverb*



# The HPO-framework

There are organizations in every sector whose long-term performance is better than comparable organizations. These are the organizations that lead the way and where you would, no doubt, like to work. These organizations do not perform better because they pay higher salaries or because of a newly introduced ICT system. Neither is their success due to restructuring or cleaner toilets. But what does make the difference? This question has formed the basis for extensive international scientific and practical research into specific factors of organizations that consistently stand out and 'shine': High Performance Organizations (HPOs).

The five major HPO factors are:

- Management Quality
- Openness & Action Orientation
- Long-Term Orientation
- Continuous Improvement & Renewal
- Employee Quality

Research highlighted that these five factors apply to every country, sector and type of organization (listed on the stock market, family business, large, small, profit, non-profit, etc.)



THE 5 STRANDS OF SUCCESS



We see the above five HPO-factors shaped as a flywheel or windmill. All of the factors are equally important. You as an individual, your department, and organization need to work on all of these HPO-factors. If you ignore any one of them, you will not become an HPO.

The five HPO-factors contain 35 characteristics that together combine the HPO-framework. They provide the guidelines towards increased and sustained success as an individual, team, department and organization.

# Results

Research shows that both employees and customers derive real benefit from becoming an HPO. For profit organizations this means more sustained increases in sales and profits than comparable organizations. HPOs in non-profit and government sectors are able to do more within the same budget and produce a higher level of quality.

HPOs also reflect better outcomes in terms of:

- Higher level of customer satisfaction
- Increased customer loyalty
- More employee job satisfaction
- Better service and product quality and innovation
- Less complaints

DEFINITION:

*"A High Performance Organization is an organization that achieves financial and non-financial results that are exceedingly better than those of its peer group over a period of time of five years or more, by focusing in a disciplined way on that which really matters to the organization."*

André de Waal, HPO Center

It pays to be a High  
Performance Organization!



# Reading and action instructions

We have written this booklet to assist you in working together with your colleagues towards being a top team, department and organization. The ultimate goal is to increase levels of employee work satisfaction, customer satisfaction, profitability, etc. In the following chapters we outline the 5 HPO-factors and 35 related characteristics. You can score each characteristic from 1 to 10 to reflect how your team or department currently rates in that characteristic. You can also write down your thoughts about how you, your manager and direct colleagues are able to improve on these. You can utilize this booklet for various activities, for example:

- ✖ Discuss positive characteristics of your team / department with colleagues;
- ✖ Discuss comparative differences between allocated scores;
- ✖ Create an action plan / list with your team for your three most important areas for improvement;
- ✖ Together establish a quarterly HPO priority factor;
- ✖ Agree on an HPO code of conduct, together after everyone has read this information.

"Life is like riding a bike.  
You need to keep going to  
maintain your balance!"

Albert Einstein

Of course, the list is not exhaustive. Let your creativity run free and add more of your own ideas.

ENJOY!

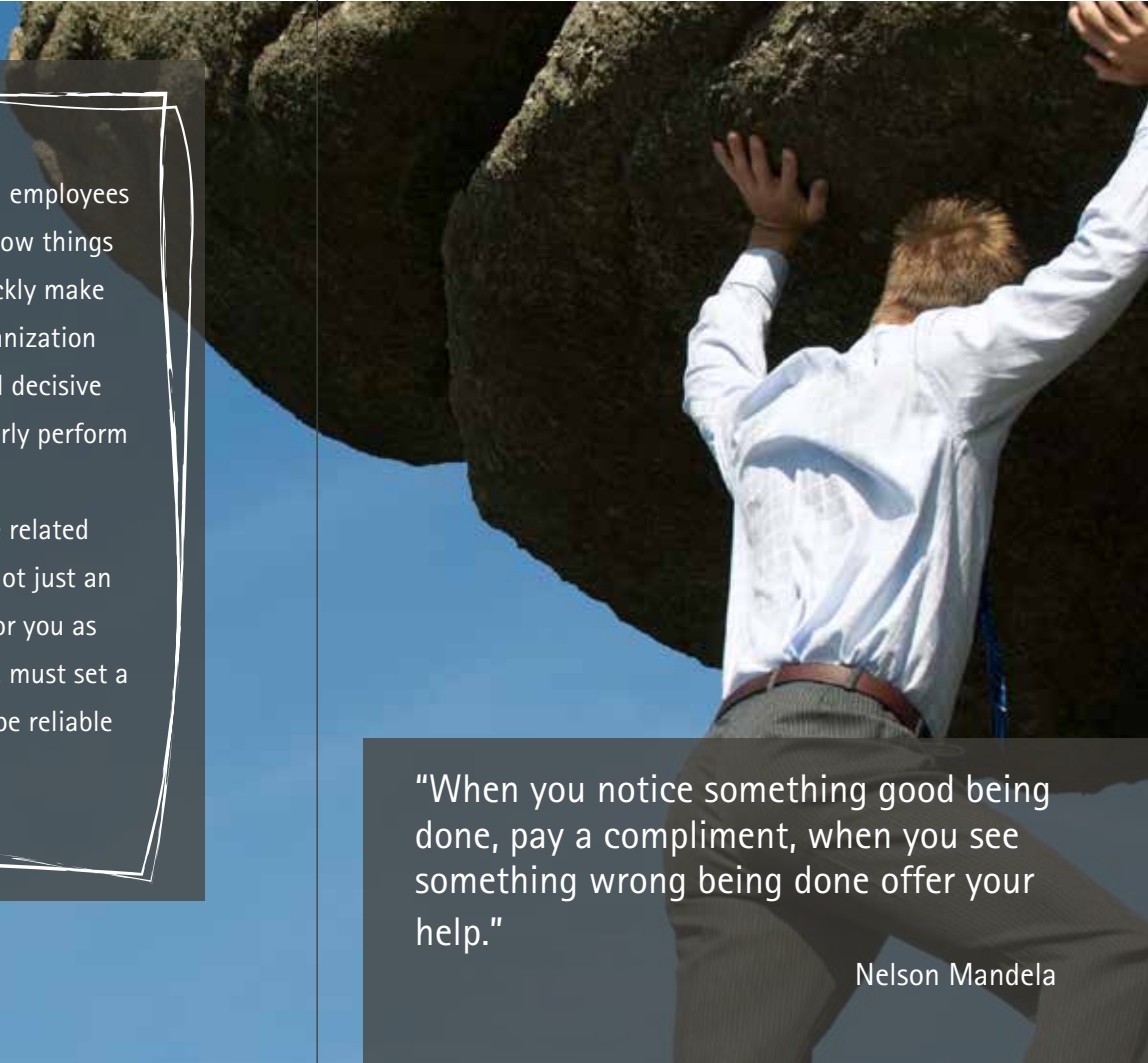
# 01 Management Quality



MANAGEMENT  
QUALITY

Managers within High Performance Organizations show integrity, coach employees to get better results, demonstrate how things can be done better themselves, quickly make decisions that are good for the organization in the long run and act in a fair and decisive way towards employees who regularly perform below par.

The following 12 characteristics are related to 'Management Quality' which is not just an important issue for managers but for you as well. Why? Everyone, including you, must set a good example, support colleagues, be reliable and take responsibility.



"When you notice something good being done, pay a compliment, when you see something wrong being done offer your help."

Nelson Mandela



# TRUST

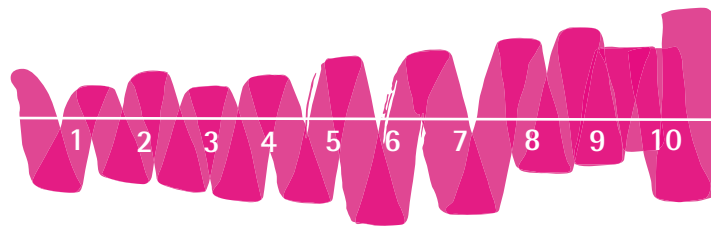
Everyone in our organization has high levels of trust in the sincerity and strength of their managers. Everyone is committed to developing and maintaining personal relationships with his or her colleagues by showing an interest in them and by entering into conversations.

"When you have trust, you do not need to see all of the stairs to climb the first step."

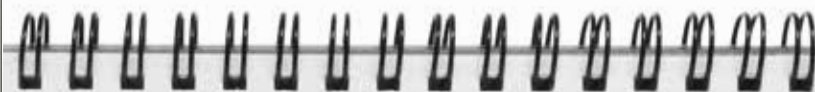
Martin Luther King

*The manager's story: "In the first days I just sat down with everyone for half an hour to just ask them who they were. I noticed that that was very much appreciated." Employee's response: "We could share our opinion in an open conversation, which was actually expected from us. Personal interest has also contributed to my trust of my manager. I notice that I will discuss things more promptly".*

Manager and employee – Insurance organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# INTEGRITY

Integrity means that you are honest and sincere. You say what you do and do what you say. You take care in what you do and work in good faith. Integrity, just like trust, is an attribute that is tricky, but not impossible to improve.

"Good people do not need laws to deal responsibly, while bad people look at how to find loopholes in the laws."

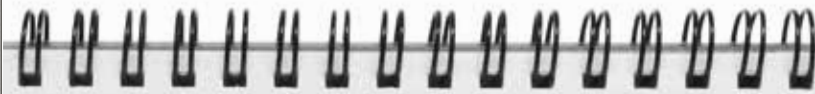
Plato (Greek philosopher and author)

*"Integrity to me means to be open, transparent and honest. Integrity runs through everything. Being able to speak your mind during a meeting for instance. If my colleagues are surprised about something then it is because I have not been clear enough, or at least not open and transparent enough. It is then up to me to open things up for discussion and to prevent it from happening again. For everyone in our organization it has become very clear what we mean by integrity."*

Planning Engineer-Construction organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





With your colleagues,  
discuss what you think  
integrity means and  
which examples relate  
to you the most.



## Notes



# STRONG ROLE MODEL

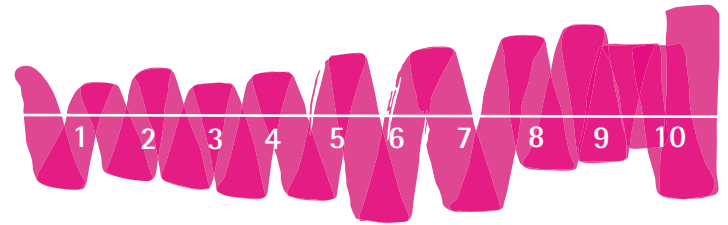
The manager is a person that others look up to. He/she is a role model for others in the organization. You want a manager who says what he/she does, and does what he/she says. That is why managers need to display exemplary behavior in their leadership style. And not just 364 days a year, but always!

"Don't tell people your dreams.  
Show them!"

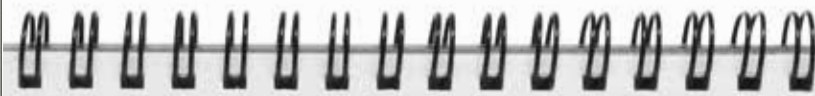
Nike

*"My supervisor is always busy being involved. He understands and shows that he enjoys things. This is tremendously motivating. I also notice that I can always learn something from him. As a result, I keep getting better at my job. He also regularly asks me to judge him on his performance. I also try to be an example for my colleagues, but notice that this sometimes slips when things get very busy."*

Concierge-Housing Corporation



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





# QUICK DECISIONS

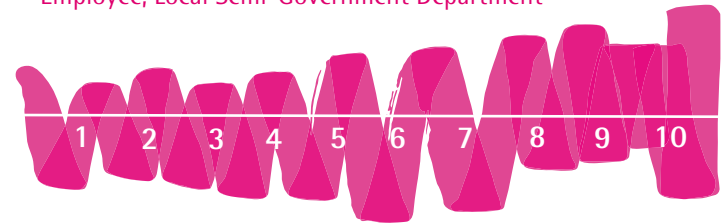
Our managers are decisive. They take enough time for informed decision making by striking a balance between thinking and doing. They take immediate action in case of problems and are able to act beyond the beaten track.

**"Our behavior depends on our decisions,  
not on our circumstances."**

Stephen Covey (bestseller author)

*"Solutions are being sought less and less in new policies and procedures and increasingly in making problems open to discussion and negotiation. We now look for solutions in desired behavior. We look at what we can do to improve ourselves. As bureaucracy decreases, flexibility and work satisfaction will increase! From our customers, the community, we also get an increasing number of indications that we are making more rapid decisions that do not usually lead to extra work."*

Employee, Local Semi-Government Department



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# QUICK ACTIONS

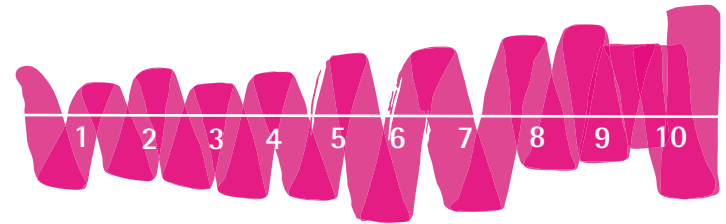
Managers encourage colleagues to take action. They follow progress and outcome of actions and reflect on decisions taken earlier so they can learn from them. To manage is the art of getting things done, and that is why prompt action is very important.

"Let he who wants to move the world take action first."

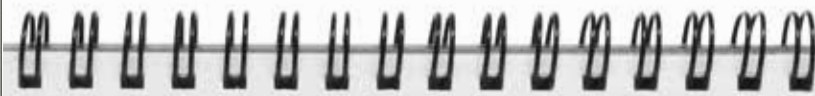
Socrates (Greek philosopher)

*An employee of an ICT company told us: "the bath water is getting colder. Oddly enough I say: just as well. In difficult times you should definitely act, do some about it. Along the way this becomes more and more enjoyable." His team leader added: "Things here are no longer just left to run their natural course. We are on the ball, so that issues do not build up. It took a bit of getting used to at first, but now it suits all of us very well."*

Employee and Team leader - ICT organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





# COACHING

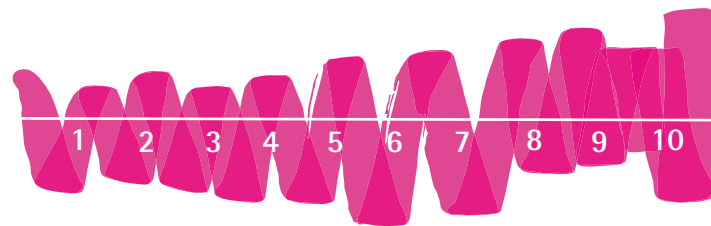
Managers coach their employees by supporting them, by protecting them against external interference and by being available when needed. They do not tell employees how to achieve something, but give them useful feedback on their performance.

"It is not my job to make things easier for people. It is up to me to make them perform better."

Steve Jobs (founder of Apple and Pixar Studios)

*"I was asked to express my wishes and ambitions. My manager did the same and we certainly did not agree on the same things. By addressing the sore points together, with respect, we eventually came to an agreement. I have learned a lot from this and it helped me to stand my ground more. I am grateful to her for this."*

Team leader – Care Facility



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



Which one of your  
colleagues can you  
encourage or support  
to perform better?  
And who do you ask for  
help?





# RESULTS ORIENTATION

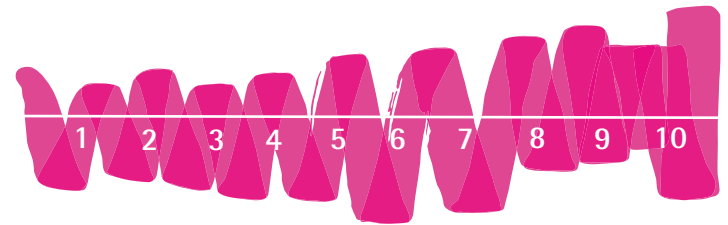
Managers are strongly focussed on achieving results. The interests of the entire organization (and not single departments) depend on this. They constantly get the best out of their employees and of themselves. They dislike time-energy- and money wasting, and are averse to bureaucracies.

"In soccer it is simple: you are on time or you are too late. If you are too late, make sure that you take off on time next time "

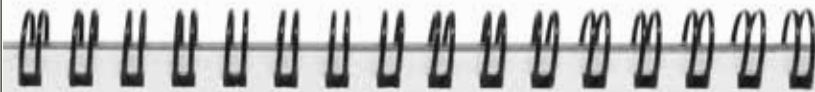
Johan Crujff (former world class  
Soccer player for Ajax and Barcelona)

*"We do our utmost for every customer. If they need 80 bus shelters tomorrow, we will do everything possible to be able to deliver all 80 tomorrow. The issue is to keep going, no short lived little successes but wanting to make the best of every day. My priority here is not the money, but that I can achieve something that is regarded by others as impossible."*

Installer-Construction organization



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# EFFECTIVENESS

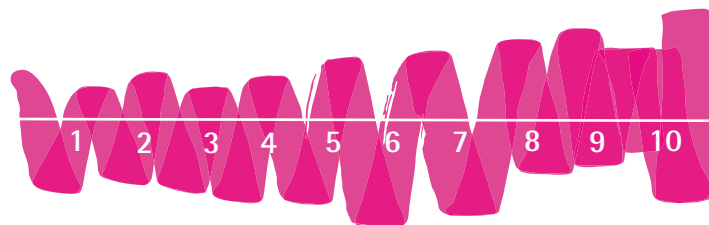
Managers in HPOs are goal-oriented and do not rest until goals are achieved. They are good at resolving conflicts quickly and in a positive way. They see both opportunities and threats at an early stage and act on them.

Of course I don't look busy,  
I did it right the first time."

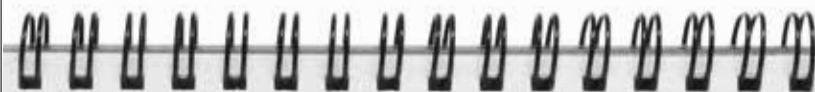
Scott Adam (cartoon artist and author)

*"Meeting time reduces productive time. We have decided together to have stand-up meetings with a clear agenda and action list. Issues never drag on for too long this way and it is nice that we can address everything quickly. Decisions are permanent and you need a very good reason to bring an item back onto the agenda."*

Engineer-technical Installation organization



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





## Notes

How effective is it to re-address the same agenda item again? Together agree that "a decision made is a decision made"!



# STRONG LEADERSHIP

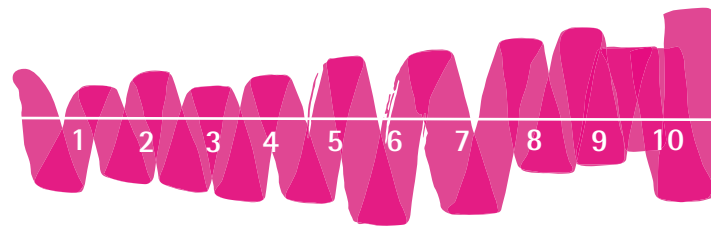
Managers in High Performance Organizations reflect involvement, enthusiasm and respect. They have their own vision, but also ask for conflicting opinions. In addition, they work hard and persist when the going gets tough. They don't hesitate in calling employees or colleagues to account if decisions are not followed up.

"Management is climbing the ladder of success effectively. Leadership determines if the ladder is leaning against the right wall."

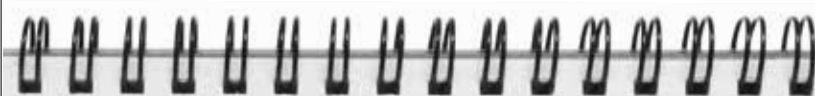
Stephen Covey (bestselling author)

*"I told my manager that he is definitely approachable and concerned, but always waits for people themselves to come to him. You now see him approaching people more often. I like to see that he has listened to me. The fact that he took my advice makes him, in my view, a good manager."*

Receptionist – Advice bureau



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





What type of remodeling do you display when the going gets tough; for example when a deadline draws near? Give each other feedback on what is good- and not very good behavior.



## Notes



# CONFIDENCE

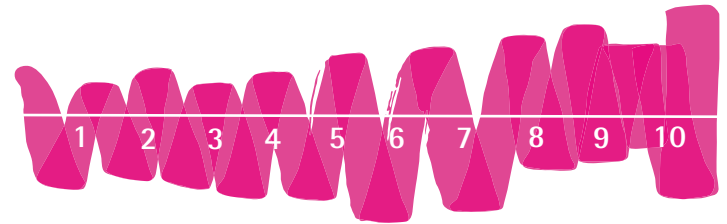
Managers in a High Performance Organization are subservient. They know their own strengths and weaknesses. They are authentic, self-aware, humble and self-disciplined.

"Those who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are those who do just that."

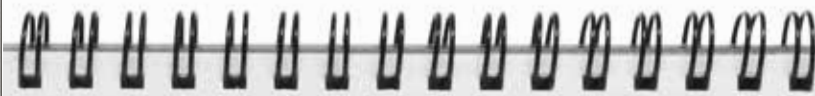
Steve Jobs (founder of Apple and Pixar Studios)

*"My manager has the confidence to make tough decisions and the compassion to be able to listen to others. She may not be a natural leader, but has become one to us through her integrity and sincere decisions. I myself am a very different person. I need a lot of reassurance in my work. Funnily enough I see my confidence improve because of hers."*

Payroll administrator – logistics service provider



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# ACCOUNTABILITY

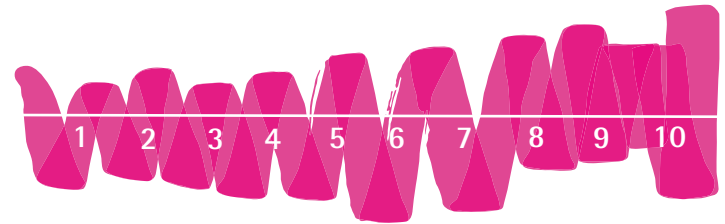
Anyone within a High Performance Organization wants to be held responsible for his or her own results. It is therefore very important that it is clear to everyone what the desired outcomes are.

"A true leader is wise enough to persuade people to do things and make them think it was their own idea."

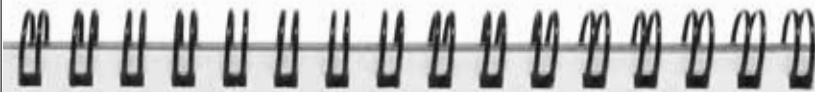
Nelson Mandela

*"When I started out as a mechanic, the chief mechanic decided everything. He ordered the parts. Then all of the mechanics were given a budget to order their own materials of up to \$ 2,500 - at a time. That works well for most of us but some colleagues still exceed their orders at times. We need to discuss this together. I have taken the initiative to check all of the orders once a week together with a colleague."*

Mechanic – Utility organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# DECISIVENESS

## TOWARD NON-PERFORMERS

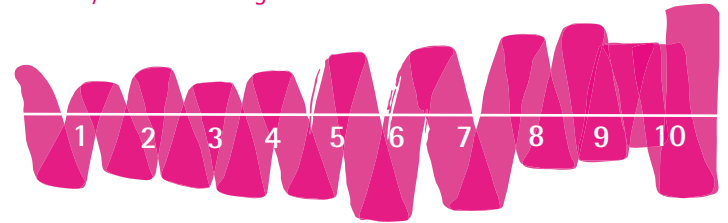
High Performance Organizations decisively deal with employees who demonstrate sustained substandard performance. This is done by assessing their achieved results and then making decisions without hesitation. Together with the person in question efforts are made to find a solution. This may also need to be outside of the organization.

"Behind the cluttered desk of an office worker: "They are too scared to fire me, I am too far behind in my work."

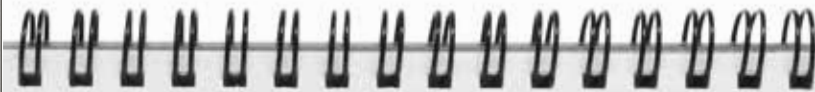
Joey Adams (author and comedian)

*"I think that sometimes we are too nice. People are spoiled, they expect the organization to come up with solutions. I have a colleague who keeps making the same mistakes. He has had extra training, and he must now demonstrate improvement this year, otherwise he will be asked to leave. Some colleagues find this an anti-social policy and claim that "this is not how we are". I see it differently. To do nothing about it is especially anti-social for those colleagues who do learn from their mistakes."*

Policy Advisor-local government



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# 02 Openness & Action Orientation



OPENNESS & ACTION  
ORIENTATION

Managers and employees in High Performance Organizations share dialogue with each other. Knowledge and experience is shared continuously to improve performance. Managers are open to change and input from their employees. Both managers and employees are 'incurably' curious. People are allowed to make mistakes but they learn from them. There is only one mistake that is never made in High Performance Organizations; and that is THE SAME MISTAKE!

"If you can divide, you can also multiply."

Anonymous

# DIALOGUE

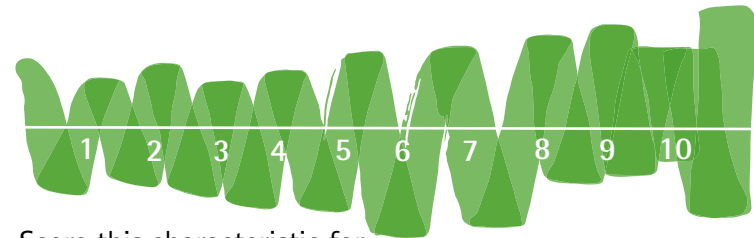
A dialogue is a two-way street. A dialogue is not designed to prove you right, but to allow you to listen to the arguments of others. Senders and receivers exchange messages containing their points of view and derive value from dialogue by making the best decision.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

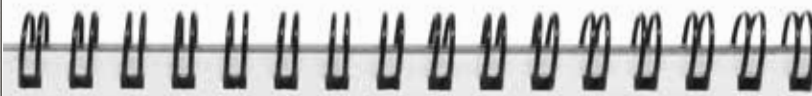
Stephen Covey (bestseller author)

*"We did not enter into dialogue, because we didn't really know how to. The road shows held by the Executive Board gave us a clearer picture of what is going on in the organization. Gradually we got more time to ask questions and give our opinions. We are now doing this in our department with our manager. He makes the final decisions on important issues, but he challenges us to provide him with our opinions. It is great to see that what is discussed, is reflected in his decisions."*

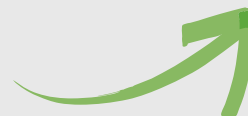
Desk Officer-Shopping Chain



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





~~Knowledge is power.~~  
**SHARED** knowledge  
is power!



# KNOWLEDGE SHARING

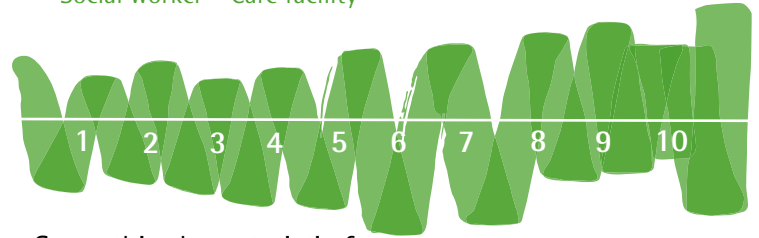
High Performance Organizations have effective processes for the sharing of knowledge. Knowledge and ideas are collected and shared by all employees who need this information. Everyone is open to new ideas and puts these into practice wherever possible.

"The essence of knowledge lies in using it when you have it and to admit when you do not."

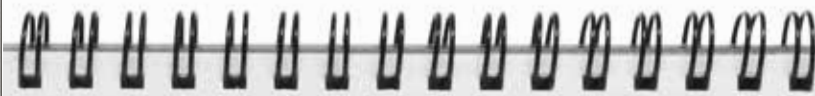
Confucius

*"We thought up a lot ourselves, but often this knowledge already existed somewhere else in the organization. In another department of the organization they were busy working on a problem for months when we already knew the solution. Now this can no longer happen! Knowledge sharing and knowledge gaining is now a shared responsibility for all of us. Monthly knowledge and experience sharing meetings with colleagues from other departments have especially supported this responsibility."*

Social worker – Care facility



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT

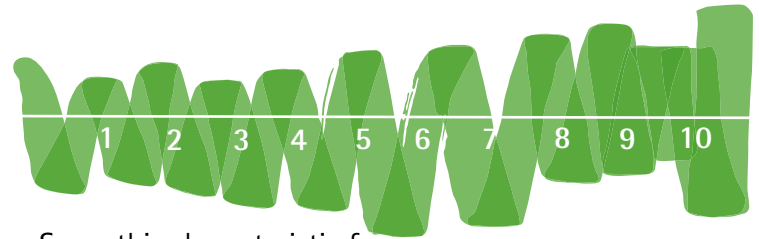
Managers involve employees who are able to make a meaningful contribution to a specific issue. These employees should be aware that they should contribute to the best interests of the organization and not just to the interests of their own department. Employees in an HPO can deal with uncertainty, because they are realistic about the fact that there are no guarantees that everything will always run the way that they would like.

"Without involvement there is no commitment."

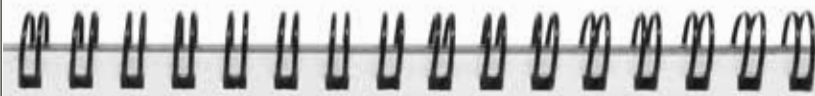
Stephen Covey (bestseller author)

*"My new manager is much more open than the previous one. We are expected to think about things. We often say that customer focus costs a lot of money. But that doesn't have to be the case now that I and my colleagues get space to come up with solutions. That gives us a lot of energy. Through this open way of working it is getting easier for me to accept that not all of my solutions are the best ones."*

Facility Assistant – ICT & Telecom organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





# ALLOWING MISTAKES

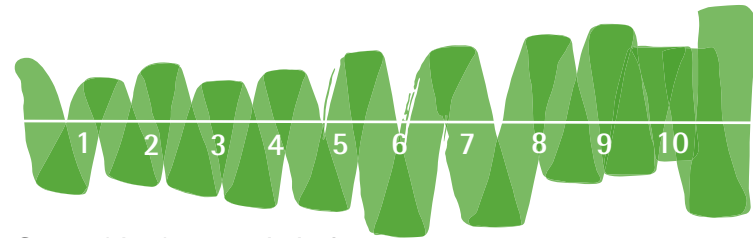
Managers tolerate mistakes by allowing employees to take risks and to experiment. Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities. High Performance Organizations only disallow one specific mistake: the same one!

"Many mistakes have been made due to the fact that people did not realize how close they were to success when they gave up."

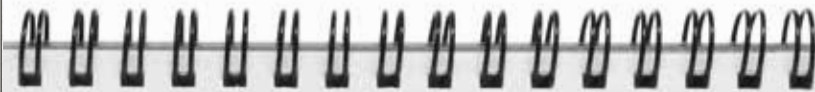
Thomas Alva Edison (inventor)

*"While he was on leave, I had space to deal with things myself. When he returned he only really asked me why I had made a certain decision. It was not the right choice, but that was not really the subject of discussion, but it was about my motivation behind my choices. Funnily enough, this has given me more self-confidence! Now I sort things out first and then ask questions."*

Employee Utility Company



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

"Failure is success as long as we learn from it."

Malcolm Forbes (publisher)

At your next meeting,  
everyone brings along  
their 'mistake of the  
month'!  
Of course, it is about  
learning from these  
mistakes; and not about  
blaming or punishing  
each other for them.



## Notes



# WELCOMING CHANGE

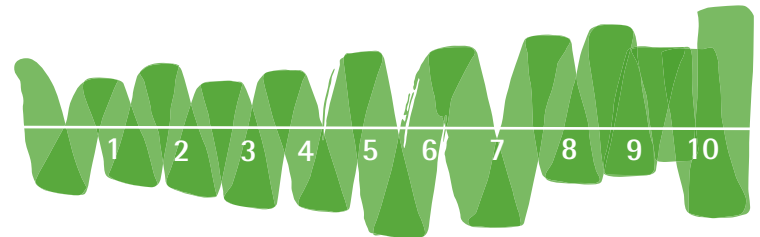
High Performance Organizations assist employees to implement real changes in the best way. Everyone is aware that any change in behavior or process is positive.

"It is not the strongest who survive, nor the most intelligent. It is those who react best to changes."

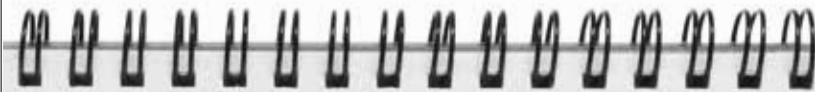
Charles Darwin

*"Together with our manager, we discussed the obstacles that stood in the way of changes in our department. We have clarified what we expect from each other and who is responsible for what. Change is pretty scary for some colleagues, but many of us can now also see that changes within our work processes can also be challenging."*

Employee – Production Company



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

"Logic takes you from A to B.  
Imagination takes you everywhere."

Albert Einstein



## Notes

What ideas for improvement would you implement?



# PERFORMANCE DRIVEN CULTURE

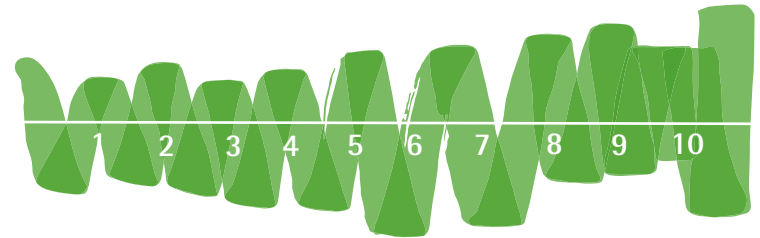
High Performance Organizations have a performance driven culture and create a winning way of thinking. They focus strongly on achieving the best possible outcomes in everything the organization does. In addition, these organizations are disciplined in carrying out their work processes and know how to cope with any disappointments.

"Never say that you do not have enough time. You have exactly the same hours a day as Michelangelo, Mother Theresa, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Jefferson and Albert Einstein."

H. Jackson Brown (author)

*"Our internal customer satisfaction has increased from 6.9 to 7.8 over last year. This is because we are specifically working on this objective. We did see that we did not score better for all points. By talking about this together we can fine tune the objectives for next year. There is always room for improvement!"*

Facility Assistant – Telecom Company



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# 03 Long-term Orientation



Long-term success always takes priority over short-term benefits in High Performance Organizations. There is a safe and stable work environment. Safety is not just about physical employee safety. Everyone in your organization should/can feel safe to speak up about issues and discuss these with colleagues. People have been working for the organization for a long time and there are plenty of opportunities for career progress. Everything focusses on long-term relationships with customers, suppliers, employees and other stakeholders.

"A politician thinks about the next election, a statesman thinks about the future."

Winston Churchill



# STAKEHOLDER ORIENTATION

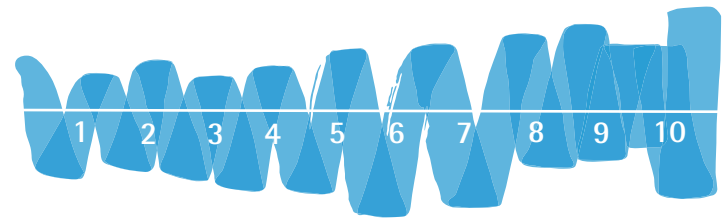
A High Performance Organization regards the prioritization of shareholders only as too limited a view and ensures good and long-term relationships with all of its stakeholders (including customers, suppliers, employees, government and the community). This provides a benefit for all parties that are involved in the success of the organization.

"If you change partners every time it gets tough or you get a little dissatisfied, then I don't think you get the richness that's available in a long-term relationship."

Jeff Bridges (actor)

*"In order to respond properly, you must be well aware of the business. Within our department there is plenty of consultation between employees. In other departments this was a lot less. I have this picked up because I can see the benefits for my customers. Together with other departments I looked at what was of mutual importance to all of us. We established our main action points based on this information."*

Policy Advisor-local government



Score this characteristic for your team or department:

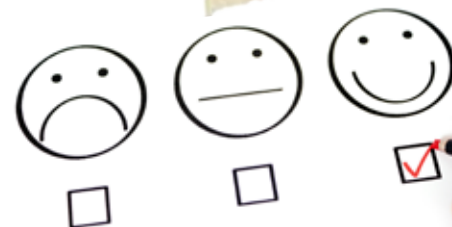


Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

Interview an internal or external customer about his/her experiences with your department. Ask them about the strength(s) of your department and what can be improved. Then discuss this with your colleagues.



## Notes



# CUSTOMER ORIENTATION

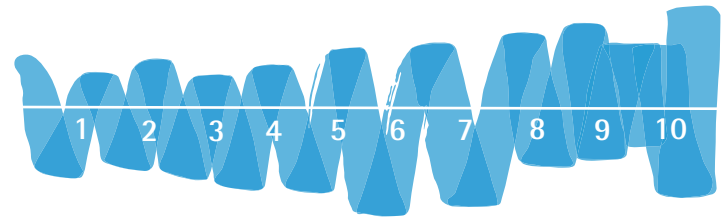
It is important to be well-informed of the needs of customers and to maintain excellent customer relationships. This occurs by having direct contact with them, to ask for feedback on a regular basis and, where necessary, make improvements.

"A customer is the most important visitor, on our premises. He is not dependent on us. We are dependent on him. He is not an interruption on work. He is the purpose of it. He is not an outsider to our business. He is part of it. We are not doing him a favor by serving him... He is doing us a favor by giving us the opportunity to do it."

Mahatma Gandhi (When working as Lawyer)

*"We need to create a unique customer experience, but what is that anyway? For example, what can make you different from others is how you deal with complaints. We do everything for the customer and I am very proud of that. If necessary, I will postpone my mother in law's birthday for them. And that creates a lot of hassles with my wife! Someone recently drove 160 kilometers extra to get a missing component. Great to see such dedicated involvement! "*

Assistant-industrial multinational



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





# LONGEVITY

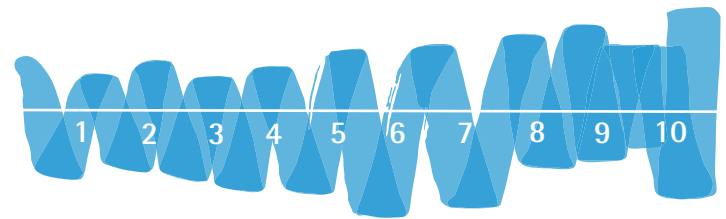
People want long careers in High Performance Organizations because they offer constant developments that keep the work challenging and inspiring. By staying in the same organization for a long time, employees can develop much knowledge about their work sector, its customers and the organization. This allows employees to quickly implement new ideas effectively.

"If you select the right people and give them room to spread their wings, you barely need to manage them."

Jack Welch (leader and author)

*"I started working here 'on the floor' years ago. Step by step, I have been able to develop further within this organization. We have been working together within the company on improving our products for years. As an employee I was involved in this early and I worked together with colleagues from sales among others, to continuously create better products for our customers. When you get that much trust and opportunity, you never want to leave".*

Leading Supervisor Production Organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

# PROMOTION FROM WITHIN

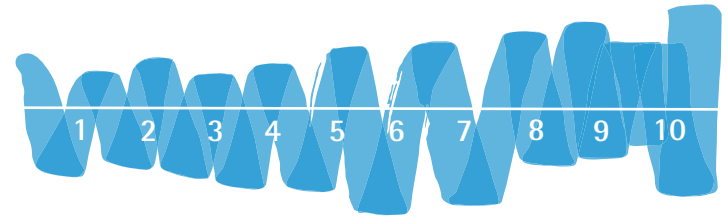
Vacancies are preferably filled with internal talent. These are people who have the right tenacity, energy and capacity to inspire others. A High Performance Organization will provide plenty of opportunities and situations in which people can develop their qualities and makes it very clear what these desired qualities are.

"Opportunities are like buses; there is always one that stops for you."

Richard Branson  
(Virgin founder, entrepreneur, adventurer and author)

*"If you do well in this organization you will also get more responsibility. Everyone, at all levels, has a mentor here. My mentor has helped me to improve in my work. Thanks to her I discovered how I got energy from supporting and coaching colleagues. I have developed from technician to Chief of Technical Services."*

Chief Technical Services - Waterworks organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



## Notes

What is your goal? What do you want to achieve? Share this with your manager and ask for assistance in actualizing your ambitions!





# A SECURE WORKPLACE

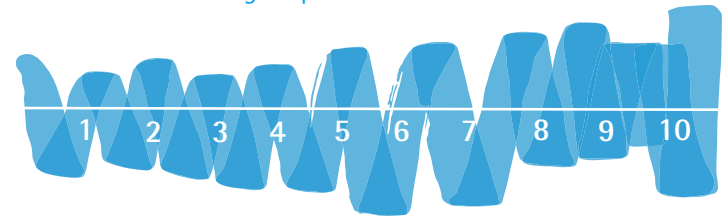
A High Performance Organization is a stable workplace without danger or fear. Because everyone gets the chance to perform at his or her best in the workplace, few people leave the organization. The organization expects that employees think about and contribute to the achievement of its corporate objectives.

"Honest disagreement is often a good sign of progress."

Mahatma Gandhi

*"Feedback was often personally. Don't you trust me? We had too much of a family feeling. When I put that on the table, it was recognized and acknowledged by everyone. The problem fact was exposed and suddenly it became possible to call and address behaviors and mistakes. We no longer accept that appointments are cancelled for no reason, that we discuss things that did go too well with each other when it is too late, and that constructive feedback is punishable. We see this new behavior right from management at the top to external service staff."*

Consultant-Housing Corporation



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:

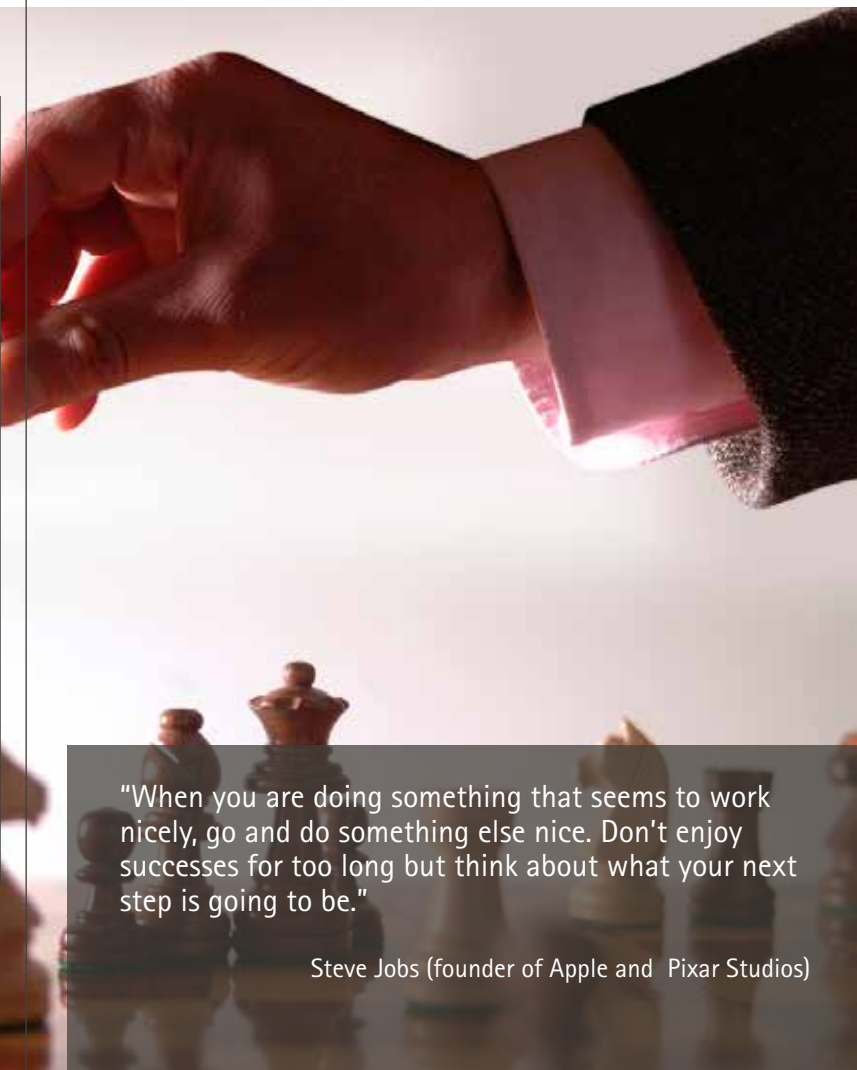
Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

# 04 Continuous Improvement & Renewal



CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT  
& RENEWAL

This factor is about constant improvement and renewal, or innovation. In a High Performance Organization employees are always motivated to bring out the best of themselves, their colleagues and the organization. The organization also tries to do everything it does in a smarter and better way than comparable organizations. That can be its products and services, but also the work processes within the organization. All this combined provides enormous energy. And that is exactly why people want to work in a High Performance Organization or be one of its customers!



"When you are doing something that seems to work nicely, go and do something else nice. Don't enjoy successes for too long but think about what your next step is going to be."

Steve Jobs (founder of Apple and Pixar Studios)

# A UNIQUE STRATEGY

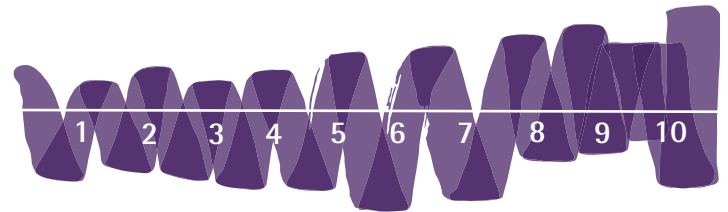
Organizations in the same industry often offer the same types of products and/or services. However, the way these are delivered and the way customers are dealt with can be very different. HPOs consciously consider the following questions: "What makes us different and better, so that customers want to come to US?"

"If you can't change the direction of the wind, reset your sails."

H. Jackson Brown (author)

*"We are well on our way to being in the lead again. Managers and employees together started thinking about what sets us apart from other banks. We looked at the industry in which we operate. We may well work more in retail than in the banking sector. As an organization we have developed our own unique language. Our motto is now: they are not your customers or my customers, but our customers! "*

Financial Assistant - Bankk



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





## Notes

Ask: "Why do I want to come and work with you in your department?" and "Why do people want to be our customers?"  
What makes you special starts with your team or department.

# PROCESS

## IMPROVEMENT, SIMPLIFICATION AND ALIGNMENT

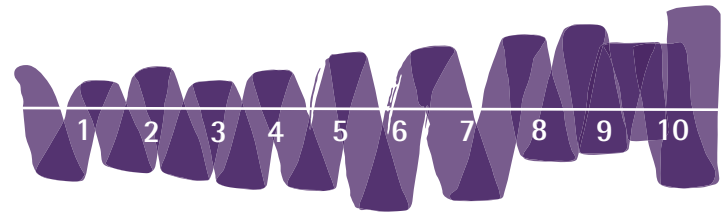
We are combining three characteristics here: process improvement, process simplification and process alignment. Work processes are constantly being coordinated, unnecessary procedures are eliminated and the organization continuously simplifies processes by standardization.

"Simplicity can be much more difficult than complexity. You need to work harder to be able to think in such a way that things seem simple. But it eventually pays off because when you reach that point you can move mountains."

Steve Jobs (founder of Apple and Pixar Studios)

*"Everyone is doing their best, but people did not really collaborate and we had about twenty processes to improve and simplify. We agreed to map out what processes would truly help our organization to do things better for the customer. We will finish those together first before we start on a new improvement process. Everyone just looked at everything from their own little island. Now we combine all of the stakeholders and highlight commonalities. Sitting behind our computers, we won't make a difference! "*

Project assistant – Telecom organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

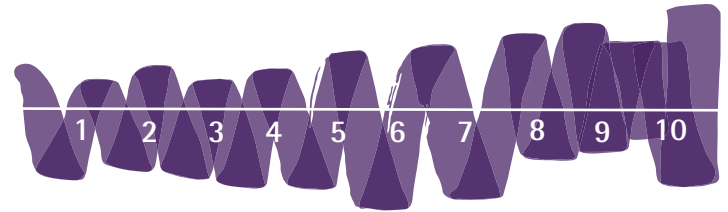
Performance management consists of two HPO-characteristics: measuring and reporting on performance and reporting to everyone within the organization. The organization measures everything that is important to being able to track progress. Those results that are of interest to employees are shared, so that everyone can work at his/her level to make further improvements.

"I never teach my students. I just try to offer them the right circumstances in which they can learn."

Albert Einstein

*"We did get information, but without any explanations. Therefore we stopped our old quarterly reporting. It had to be simplified and with explanations of what action points I could get out of them as front counter employee. Since this adjustment I can really make use out of them."*

Employee-Semi government agency



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?





## Notes

Share your ideas about how to keep improving products or services. If you do this in a positive way, they will be applied!



# INNOVATION OF PRODUCTS, SERVICES, PROCESSES AND CORE COMPETENCIES

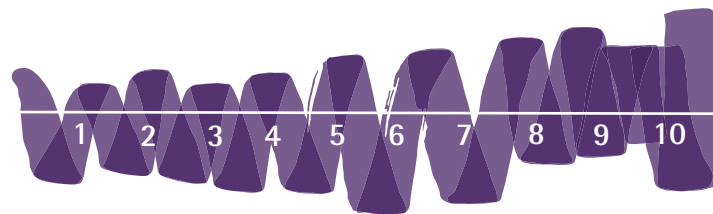
HPO employees are constantly trying to improve customer service. The organization wants more than to just meet changing market demands but to anticipate these also. HPOs therefore encourage being open to change and innovations. This makes work more varied and thus more enjoyable!

"Without constant growth and progress, terms such as improvements, achievements and success have no meaning at all."

Benjamin Franklin  
(American scientist and politician)

*"Not just my supervisor, but I also often look at new trends within and outside of our industry. We are open to new ideas, even though things do not always turn out right the first time. That may not be what you expected from a local council. But by renewing our services, focus has now shifted more to businesses and citizens. Those who were not so used to this are also making progress."*

Policy Officer- Local Council



Score this characteristic for  
your team or department:




Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# 05 Employee Quality

Employees in High Performance Organizations want to be inspired to achieve better results for their department and organization. They take responsibility for the results they achieve; both positive and negative. These are employees who push just that little harder in order to get the best out of themselves and the organization. Their workforce is diverse. They complement one other in both strength and weakness.



"If you are doing what you enjoy, you never need to work."

Mahatma Gandhi



# INSPIRATION

Employees are inspired to do their utmost and to continually improve themselves. They are proud of their results and those of the organization. They know how to improve performance by raising the bar each time. Employees search for interesting and challenging work and always want more responsibility in this.

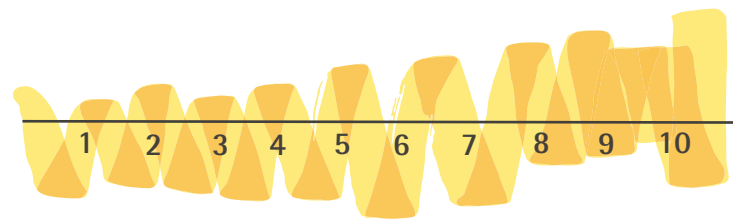
"Opportunity is missed by most people because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work."

Thomas Edison (inventor)

-100-

*"Because of a few newly appointed team leaders you can observe different behaviors. They are interested in what we do. At the same time they stimulate us to think out of the box. This offers new opportunities. We used to be happy with a mark of 6 out of ten, but now we aim higher. I expect more from myself now, but also from my colleagues."*

Employee-Children's Hospital



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

"A pessimist sees difficulties in every opportunity; an optimist sees opportunities in every difficulty."

Sir Winston Churchill

# RESILIENCE AND FLEXIBILITY

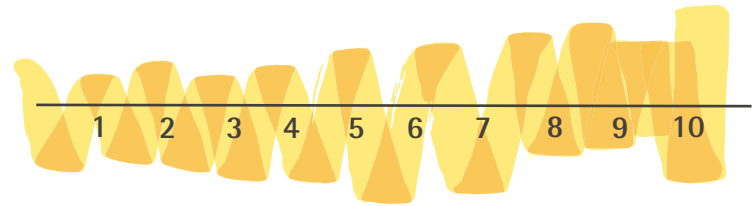
High Performance Organizations are able to cope well with insecurities and changes. They create a working environment in which setbacks never mean giving up but always mean looking for new ways to achieve objectives.

"I measure someone's success not by how he climbs the ladder but by how high he bounces back after hitting the ground."

Generaal George S. Patton

*"It starts with accepting that organizations change continuously. That will always remain the same and that is not to annoy us but because of the ever-changing world in which we live. Within our company this insight has created a more positive atmosphere. I tried out an idea recently, which did not work out in practice. Together with some colleagues we started looking for a better solution."*

Team leader – Transport organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

What is going to change within your industry in the near future?

Together with your colleagues think of ideas that will help you to deal positively with these.



## Notes





# A DIVERSE AND COMPLEMENTARY WORKFORCE

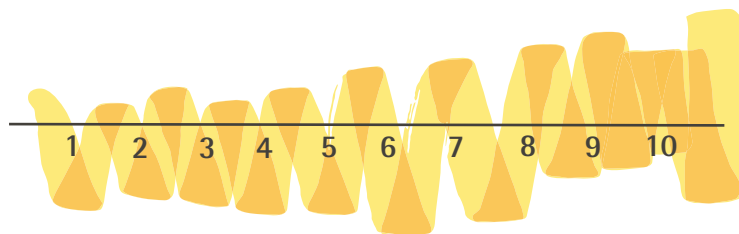
People who work for High Performance Organizations differ from each other in many ways and thus combine an overall strength the organization needs. This is achieved by a workforce that is different in terms of age, gender, origin, education and work experience.

"Isn't it amazing that we are all made in God's image, and yet there is so much diversity among his people?"

Desmond Tutu

*"I was asked by our head office why we employ, for example, older people. We take these people on because of their diversity. Older people contribute various work and life experiences and thus provide balance in the team. Diversity within teams is not always easy to begin with, but it has brought us a dynamic and reflective team spirit."*

HR Advisor – Accountant organization



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?

What makes us strong?  
TEAM work!

T<sub>ogether</sub>

E<sub>veryone</sub>

A<sub>chieves</sub>

M<sub>ore</sub>

Notes



# PARTNERSHIP

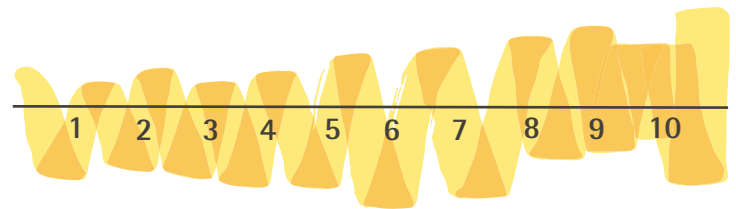
HPO employees constantly look for ways to team up with customers, suppliers and partners. They know they can learn a lot from each other in order to achieve the best outcomes for all parties.

"If you want to be fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

African proverb

*"I learn a lot from my customers and I regularly ask them for advice. I do not feel myself to be above this and see that they appreciate it. Vice versa, if I give them feedback they are open -minded to absorb my feedback. The art is now to also start seeing our suppliers as true partners! "*

Advisor – Consultancy Agency



Score this characteristic for your team or department:



Do you have ideas on how to improve this characteristic?



# What are you going to do now?

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You have read about the characteristics of a High Performance Organization and you have looked at the performance of your team or department. What can you do now to raise yourself, department, or organization to a higher level? After all, every action starts with you, but you don't have to do it all by yourself! Discuss your ideas and areas for improvement with your colleagues and manager.

Working towards being an HPO is challenging and enjoyable. This is how you can enjoy work!



"Become the type of leader that people want to follow voluntarily, even if you had no title or position."

Brian Tracy (entrepreneur and author)

# More information

See our website ([www.hpocenter.com](http://www.hpocenter.com)) for more in-depth information, case studies and articles. We also provide a monthly newsletter on: ([http://forms.hpocenter.com/HPO\\_eLetter\\_Subscription](http://forms.hpocenter.com/HPO_eLetter_Subscription)) and share more information via social media:



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Become one of our members today or 'like' us!

Download the free English HPO App and always have the 35 characteristics of High Performance Organizations on your phone!



iPhone/iPad



Android sets

## HPO BOOK FOR MANAGERS

For business leaders and senior managers we published the HPO bestseller 'What Makes A High Performance Organization'. The book includes many real-life examples from organizational branches, e.g., Finance, Retail, Industry, ICT, High Education and Government, illustrating the workings of the HPO Framework at organizations in Western and emerging markets. Also included are interviews with HPO leaders, e.g., Microsoft, SABMiller, Svenska Handelsbanken, HP, Unilever, Umpqua Bank, Tata Steel and Air France KLM Royal Dutch Airlines.



# About the authors

**Marco Schreurs** (schreurs@hpocenter.com), co-founder of Direction and the HPO Center and author of Animal Firm, enjoys mutual brainstorming, linked to outcomes, innovative marketing concepts, Italian cuisine, quiet forests, Nils and Anna, chatting with friends, running, roaming across the world, beautiful white wines, Counting Crows, The Shawshank Redemption and Into the Wild ...

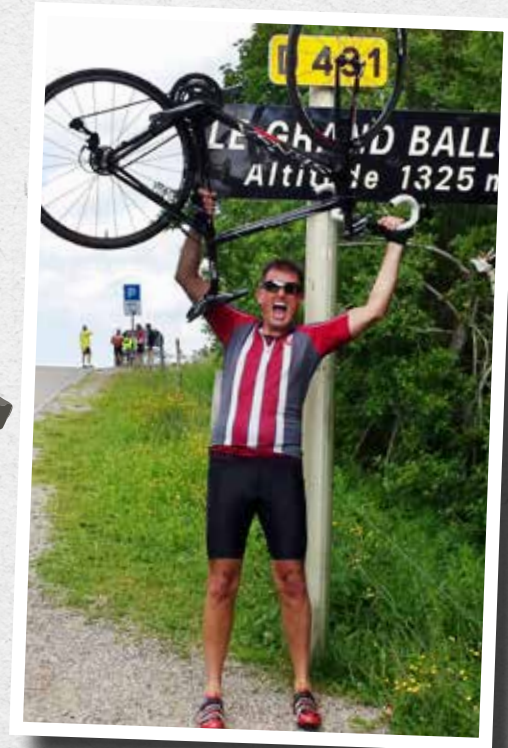
**MARCO**



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**Alex Meingast** (meingast@hpocenter.com) is crazy about action. He insists on guiding organizations towards higher performance levels. In addition; a passionate athlete (cycling and running), music lover (including Rolling Stones and Bruce Springsteen) and when time permits, watching various movies or adventure mini-series. Favorites include: Once upon a time in the West, Kill Bill and Grizzly man.

**ALEX**



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# HPO Center

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Customers, employees, suppliers, shareholders, society – everyone benefits when organizations perform as HPOs. We beam with pride every time we succeed in inspiring and challenging managers and employees to embark on the road towards becoming an excellent organization. The HPO Center aims to be the source of inspiration and knowledge worldwide when it comes to 'what' makes an organization better and what drives managers and employees within those organizations to improve their performance.

We are a knowledge and inspiration center (headquarters in The Netherlands) that uses continuous research to work with organizations around the world (including emerging markets) that are driven to improve their performance. Inspiring, rousing and connecting people in a network is our passion. We use the HPO concept to hold a mirror up to organizations and provide a foundation for continuous performance improvement. This is our mission. This is what drives us.

The HPO Center aims to become the global expert in what makes organizations even more effective. We provide knowledge to this end in the form of diagnoses, interviews, books, articles, lectures, networks and workshops. The HPO Experts support organizations in implementing the desired improvements. We have also recently begun new research that looks in-depth at this subject, including studies into High Performance Employees (HPE) and High Performance Partnerships (HPP). If you have questions or comments, or you would like to contact us for an inspiring HPO-lecture, workshop, HPO-diagnosis, or if you have a follow-up question about leadership and/or team building?

Marco and Alex can be reached at  
+ 31 (0) 35 – 603 70 07 or via our website  
[www.hpocenter.com](http://www.hpocenter.com).

**WE LOOK FORWARD  
TO HEARING FROM YOU!**



Printable characteristic cards!



With your colleagues, discuss what you think integrity means and which examples relate to you most.



Which one of your colleagues can you encourage or support to perform better?  
And who do you ask for help?

How effective is it to re-address the same agenda item again?  
Together agree that "a decision made is a decision made"!



What type of remodeling do you display when the going gets tough; for example when a deadline draws near?  
Give each other feedback on what is good- and not very good behavior.





~~Knowledge is power~~

SHARED knowledge is power!

At your next meeting, everyone brings along their 'mistake of the month'! Of course, it is about learning from these mistakes; and not about blaming or punishing each other for them.



What ideas for improvement would you implement?

Interview an internal or external customer about his/her experiences with your department.

Ask them about the strength(s) of your department and what can be improved. Then discuss this with your colleagues.







What is your goal? What do you want to achieve?

Share this with your manager and ask for assistance in actualizing your ambitions!



Ask: "Why do I want to come and work with you in your department?" and "Why do people want to be our customers?" What makes you special starts with your team or department.

Share your ideas about how to keep improving products or services.

If you do this in a positive way, they will be applied!



What is going to change within your industry in the near future?

Together with your colleagues think of ideas that will help you to deal positively with these.





What makes us strong?

TEAM work!

**T**ogether

**E**veryone

**A**chieves

**M**ore

